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MRS. MATTICE

ENGLISH 10 HONORS

20011-2012

**ENGLISH HONORS OUTSIDE READING**

You will be required to read 4 books independently this year.

**Quarters I-IV**: Choose one text from each list. An essay component will accompany each independent reading selection. Dates and assignments will be provided in class. It does not matter what order you complete each list. Consider your own schedules to determine what works best for you.

**BOOK CHOICE #1 and ESSAY ARE DUE THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 3rd!!**

**LIST ONE: Choose one**

***The Odyssey by Homer***

Long before *The Lord of the Rings*, *Star Wars*, and Harry Potter, the ancient Greek poet Homer established the standard for tales of epic quests and heroic journeys with *The Odyssey*. Crowded with characters, both human and non-human, and bursting with action, *The Odyssey* details the adventures of Odysseus, king of Ithaca and hero of the Trojan War, as he struggles to return to his home and his waiting, ever-faithful wife, Penelope. Along the way he encounters the seductive Circe, who changes men into swine; the gorgeous water-nymph, Calypso, who keeps him a “prisoner of love” for seven years; the terrible, one-eyed, man-eating giant Cyclops; and a host of other ogres, wizards, sirens, and gods. But when he finally reaches Ithaca after ten years of travel, his trials have only begun. There he must battle the scheming noblemen who, thinking him dead, have demanded that Penelope choose one of them to be her new husband—and Ithaca’s new king.

***Catch-22 by Joseph Heller***

*Catch-22* is like no other novel we have ever read. It has its own style, its own rationale, its own extraordinary character. It moves back and forth from hilarity to horror. It is outrageously funny and strangely affecting. It is totally original. It is set in the closing months of World War II, in an American bomber squadron on a small island off Italy. Its hero is a bombardier named Yossarian, who is frantic and furious because thousands of people he hasn't even met keep trying to kill him. (He has decided to live forever even if he has to die in the attempt.) His problem is Colonel Cathcart, who keeps raising the number of missions the men have to fly.

The others range from Lieutenant Milo Minderbinder, a dedicated entrepreneur (he bombs his own airfield when the Germans make him a reasonable offer: cost plus 6%), to the dead man in Yossarian's tent; from Major Major Major, whose tragedy is that he resembles Henry Fonda, to Nately's whore's kid sister; from Lieutenant Scheisskopf (he loves a parade) to Major -- de Coverley, whose face is so forbidding no one has ever dared ask him his first name; from Clevinger, who is lost in the clouds, to the soldier in white, who lies encased in bandages from head to toe and may not even be there at all; from Dori Duz, who does, to the wounded gunner Snowden, who lies dying in the tail of Yossarian's plane and at last reveals his terrifying secret. *Catch-22* is a microcosm of the twentieth-century world as it might look to someone dangerously sane. It is a novel that lives and moves and grows with astonishing power and vitality. It is, we believe, one of the strongest creations of the mid-century.

**LIST TWO: Choose one bullet**

***Animal Farm* by George Orwell *Animal Farm by George Orwell***

Orwell's classic political fable is often cited as simply a condemnation of Stalinism, which it certainly was, but its political relevance is both wider and more enduring, as novelist Ann Patchett notes in her introductory essay to this new edition. Among the lessons contained in its pages is the need of politicians for "The Enemy" (think Axis of Evil) and the dangers of individuality to oppressive political order.

***Oedipus The King by Sophocles***

*Oedipus the King* is the story of Oedipus, King of Thebes. Abandoned as a young child, Oedipus returns to Thebes, unaware of his heritage and the phrophecy surrounding his birth. The fulfillment of his destiny and of those prophecies results in grave consequences for the royal house of Thebes. The stirring tale of a legendary royal family's fall and ultimate redemption, the Theban trilogy endures as the crowning achievement of Greek drama. Sophocles' 3-play cycle, chronicling Oedipus's search for the truth and its tragic results, remains essential reading for English and classical studies majors as well as for all students of Western civilization.

***House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros**

Here is Sandra Cisnero's greatly admired and best-selling novel of a young girl growing up in the Latino section of Chicago. Acclaimed by critics, beloved by children and their parents and grandparents, taught everywhere from inner-city grade schools to universities across the country, and translated all over the world, *The House on Mango Street* has entered the canon of coming-of-age classics even as it depicts a new American landscape. Sometimes heartbreaking, sometimes deeply joyous, *The House on Mango Street* tells the story of Esperanza Cordero, whose neighborhood is one of harsh realities and harsh beauty. Esperanza doesn't want to belong - not to her run-down neighborhood, and not to the low expectations the world has for her. Esperanza's story is that of a young girl coming into her power, and inventing for herself what she will become. *The San Francisco Chronicle* has called *The House on Mango Street* "marvelous... spare yet luminous. The subtle power of Cisnero's storytelling is evident. She communicates all the rapture and rage of growing up in a modern world." It is an extraordinary achievement that will live on for years to come.

**LIST THREE: Choose one**

***Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven* by Sherman Alexie**

In this darkly comic collection, Alexie brilliantly weaves memory, fantasy, and stark realism to paint a complex, grimly ironic portrait of life in and around the Spokane Indian Reservation. These twenty-two interlinked tales are narrated by characters raised on humiliation and government-issue cheese, and yet are filled with passion and affection, myth and dream. Against a backdrop of alcohol, car accidents, laughter, and basketball, Alexie depicts the distances between Indians and whites, reservation Indians and urban Indians, men and women, and, most poetically, modern Indians and the traditions of the past.

***Their Eyes Were Watching God by Zora Neale Hurston***

Initially published in 1937, this novel about a proud, independent black woman's quest for identity, a journey that takes her through three marriages and back to her roots, has been one of the most widely read and highly acclaimed novels in the canon of African-American literature.

***A Separate Peace* by John Knowles *A Separate Peace by John Knowles***

Set at a boys' boarding school in New England during the early years of World War II, *A Separate Peace* is a harrowing and luminous parable of the dark side of adolescence. Gene is a lonely, introverted intellectual. Phineas is a handsome, taunting, daredevil athlete. What happens between the two friends one summer, like the war itself, banishes the innocence of these boys and their world. A bestseller for more than thirty years, *A Separate Peace* is John Knowles's crowning achievement and an undisputed American classic.

**LIST FOUR: Choose one**

***July’s People* by Nadine Gordimer**

For years, it had been what is called a "deteriorating situation." Now all over South Africa the cities are battlegrounds. The members of the Smales family - liberal whites - are rescued from the terror by their servant, July, who leads them to refuge in his village. What happens to the Smaleses and to July - the shifts in character and relationships - gives us an unforgettable look into the terrifying, tacit understandings and misunderstandings between blacks and whites.

***Slaughterhouse-Five* by Kurt Vonnegut *Slaughterhouse-Five by Kurt Vonnegut***

Unstuck in time, Billy Pilgrim, Vonnegut's shattered survivor of the Dresden bombing, relives his life over and over again under the gaze of aliens; he comes at last to some understanding of the human comedy.

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**Helpful hints/tips**: Essays will be assigned in class. They must be typed, double spaced, Times New Roman 12 font with proper MLA format and heading. They must be edited and error free in grammar and mechanics. A grading rubric and sample essay will also be provided to help you.